

## A Natural Objectivist's Response to Skepticism by John Gibson

*The purpose of this essay is to provide an opposing point of view to the position of knowledge denial (skepticism) as supported by Richard Feynman, and the Skepticism school of thought. There are alternatives. Natural Objectivism is one of them.*

In the article Seeking New Laws of Nature (pg. 129) from Twenty Questions: An Introduction to Philosophy by Bowie Michaels and Solomon, Richard Feynman states that “We never are definitely right, we can only be sure we are wrong.” Before continuing I should point out that this statement is a good example of circular reasoning and negative proof. Feynman also states that a theory “can never” be proven right. Semantically speaking I suppose that statement has validity since once a theory has been proven to be correct, it becomes a *principle theorem*, or fact of reality that can be considered a truth or knowledge. Feynman’s equivocation on the word “theory” for knowledge, in no way hides the fact that he is attempting to deny the *validity* of knowledge. This position is formally known as Skepticism. Skepticism promotes the *evasion* knowledge, consequently, the evasion of truth as well. This is the same school of thought purporting that there are no absolutes (which is essentially the same thing as saying nothing can be proven to be true). This implies that we can not achieve certainty about anything. I reject that postulation for many reasons but initially I react from the absurdity of the statement itself making an *absolute* claim to certainty about being uncertain.

As prelude to my refutation of Feynman’s position, I feel compelled to make the distinction between skepticism in science which is tenet of the scientific method, and the topic of this discourse which is Skepticism as a philosophical postulation on existence. I also include definitions of *knowledge* and *axiom*, from Webster’s dictionary, in order to establish a common interpretation of those terms for this essay.

**Knowledge**, *n*: 1. Clear and certain perception of an event or fact of reality.  
cognizance: recognition; information acquired by observation.  
2. Learning: all that has been perceived or grasped by the mind.

**Axiom**, *n*: 1. A self evident truth: a proposition whose truth is evident such that no process or demonstration can make it plainer.  
2. An established principle of science.

Based on these definitions I proceed with the understanding that knowledge is a mental grasp of reality, reached by a process of reason based on verifiable observation. I also derive by diction that an *axiomatic concept* is the identification of a principle of reality that *can not be reduced or analyzed into other components*. With these definitions I state the fundamental axiomatic concepts of Natural Objectivism as *existence*, *identity*, and *consciousness*. These axioms are implicit in all knowledge and all facts. Existence

merits identification for the sake of our (humankind) understanding of the concept as such, and it is simply that existence exists. Existence can not be reduced to any other sub-parts or components and therefore needs no other evaluation or verification. An argument that would attempt to disprove existence would constitute an absurdity (i.e. proof by means of non-existence). The first corollary on existence is *identity*: such that an object *is what it is* (i.e. a stone is a stone, a tree is a tree, or in the most basic of terms,  $A = A$ ) and an object's characteristics make up its identification. Consciousness is the faculty of awareness that enables the perception of existence and identity. Existence, identity and consciousness, are the irreducible primaries implicit in any action, in every aspect of perception, from the beginning of one's life to its end. All knowledge and truths are verifiable and rest on these axiomatic concepts.

With these concepts in mind, what then is an absolute? Well, the axioms I just mentioned are absolutes. Reality is an absolute, a tree is absolutely a tree, and so on. The laws of Nature are absolute. The laws of Nature are unequivocal, absolute universal corollaries of existence. I am not however, attempting to imply that all of Nature's secrets are attainable. Humankind obviously does not know or fully comprehend all of Nature's laws, but that discrepancy in the repository of human knowledge, in no way allows an existence that defies those laws. Pardon the personification, but neither does Nature care about the accuracy or inaccuracy of our theories concerning her order. But the fact that Nature has secrets, and that we are as yet unable to access many of them, is in no way a valid negation of the knowledge and truths that have been observed and verified. Also, neither does the *inability* to verify a theory negate other known truths. Factual, knowable information is not contingent on doubt or skepticism.

The principles of an objective reality are self-evident and absolute. (Note that I do not claim to offer proof of these principles. An attempt to prove an irreducible self-evident principle would be equally as absurd as trying to disprove it. An attempted reduction of  $A = A$  constitutes a logical absurdity.) To propose that these truths are anything other than self-evident axioms of reality, is to deny and evade truth and knowledge. To deny these axioms as absolutes is to doubt your mind and its ability to form cogent, rational evaluations of your perceptions. To assert that these natural facts can not be proved (facts such as existence, or whether gasoline may or may not be flammable tomorrow) is to create an unnatural dichotomy between logic and reality. This kind of anti-reasoning is what the skepticist sustains, and is well represented by Richard Feynman in [Seeking New Laws of Nature](#). Credulity in a system that permits this kind of abandonment of reason leaves its constituents with the hopelessness of perpetual uncertainty. Fortunately, reason and rational thinking are matters of volition. It is not required that anyone subject themselves to the impairment of their rational faculties as Skepticism (Feynman's version or any other) demands. There is a natural objective alternative that demands the application of *reason*, which inherently sustains the integrity of knowledge and truth.